



EST. JUNE 2007



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW JERSEY

Accredited State Chamber
of Commerce with Distinction
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

WOMEN WHO **EMPOWER** AWARDS LUNCHEON

A Celebration of Leaders

May 14, 2026 Princeton Marriott - Forrestal, Princeton NJ

WOMEN WHO EMPOWER 2026 AWARDS LUNCHEON PROGRAM

REGISTRATION & NETWORKING

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM
CHAMPAGNE BAR
MUSIC BY TOTAL EXPOSURE ENTERTAINMENT

OPENING REMARKS

12:00 PM - 12:05 PM
DEBORAH FRAZIER
AACCNJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS
WEALTH MANAGEMENT ADVISOR
LRG WEALTH ADVISORS/HIGHTOWER

SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION

12:05 PM - 12:10 PM

CHAMPAGNE TOAST & LUNCH MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT BY SHOWTYME BROOKS

12:15 PM – 1:15 PM

REMARKS - KEYNOTE SPEAKER

1:15 PM – 1:35 PM
MARILYN D.DAVIS
PRESIDENT/CEO
MDD CONNECTIONS, LLC

AWARDS PRESENTATION

1:40 PM – 2:25 PM
DR. JOHN E. HARMON SR., IOM
FOUNDER, PRESIDENT, CEO, AACCNJ

CLOSING REMARKS

2:25 PM – 2:30 PM
TANYA L. FREEMAN, ESQ.
CHIEF STRATEGY & POLICY OFFICER, AACCNJ
FOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER
TANYA FREEMAN LAW , LLC
CHAIR, NY STATE BLACK BUSINESS ALLIANCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 ABOUT THE AACCNJ
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

02 PAST HONOREES ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
HONOREES BIOGRAPHIES

03 SPONSOR RECOGNITION
MEDIA PARTNERS - SERVICE PROVIDERS

Live Musical Entertainment by

Showtyme Brooks

International Soul Singer

Songwriter & Producer



Musical Entertainment



1 ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW



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Letter from the **PRESIDENT**

WOMEN WHO EMPOWER
2026 AWARDS LUNCHEON

May 14, 2026

Dear Honorees, Former Honorees, Sponsors, & Guests,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Staff, and Members of the AACCNJ, we would like to thank you for your attendance today at the 2026 **Women Who Empower** Awards Luncheon.

Today, we pause to celebrate a distinguished group of women whose work meaningfully impacts lives and the economy every day. Our acknowledgment serves as a symbol of our appreciation for each woman being recognized.

Women are essential drivers of progress; across New Jersey and the United States, they are at the forefront of innovation and transformation. It is in this spirit that we have the distinct privilege of celebrating our 2026 Honorees—women of distinction, purpose, and passion:

Regina Appolon, Government Affairs Advisor, McCarter & English
Jeannine Frisby LaRue, Partner, Moxie Strategies
Ferlanda Fox Nixon, Esq., IOM, CAE, President & CEO, Newark Regional Business Partnership (NRBP)
Funke Olayinka, MD, Chief Executive Officer, GHIT Consulting, Inc.
Glenda Thomas, President & CEO, Electra Grid Solutions
Abbey True Harris, Partner, Connell Foley

Senior Leadership of the AACCNJ

Jacqueline E. Baptiste - 15 Year Anniversary
Executive Advisor to President & CEO & Brand Ambassador
Nicole Baptiste, IOM, Vice President, Membership Acquisition & Financial Administration
Mary Griffin, IOM, PMP, Vice President, Membership Retention & Programs
Carmen Gates, Vice President, Community Development & External Affairs Officer
Vivian Harmon, M.Ed., MSW, LSW, Executive Director, Training & Development Institute

Special Recognition to AACCNJ Staff & Adjunct Staff Members

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Marilyn Davis, President and CEO of MDD Connections, LLC, for serving as this year's keynote speaker.

Additionally, let us take a moment to remember last year's keynote speaker, Lisa Lovell. May she rest in peace.

Enjoy the Awards Luncheon,

Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder, President & CEO
African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ



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SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION

BRONZE SPONSORS



capitahealth



ELIZABETHTOWN
GAS



McCarter &
English

SILVER SPONSOR



CONNELL
FOLEY

A TRADITION OF LEGAL EXCELLENCE SINCE 1938

EST. JUNE 2007



About the AACCNJ

The African American Chamber

of Commerce of New Jersey performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders, to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic

diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.



November 23, 2022, The United States Chamber of Commerce awarded the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey with its Accredited State Chamber with Distinction designation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community.

"Chambers of commerce that achieve an Accreditation designation are truly leaders in their industry." said Raymond P. Towle, U.S. Chamber Vice President, Federation Relations and IOM. "This rigorous review includes all aspects of a chamber's policies, operations, and programming. When chambers of commerce earn the distinction of becoming Accredited, it is a mark of excellence for the organization, its staff, and its leadership. Accredited chambers are recognized for their ability to serve as a resource to their region's businesses while maintaining transparent governance practices, sound financial controls, safe work environments, effective communications, and value in programming. They are commended for their continued advocacy of free enterprise, and for their commitment to serving members and their local businesses. Congratulations on this tremendous accomplishment."

In **March of 2019**, The United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC) awarded the AACCNJ with three stars Accreditation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community. **The Chamber joins the top 3 percent of all chambers in the nation who are Accredited as both the only accredited Chamber in New Jersey and the only African American Chamber in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce federation to hold this distinction. With approximately 7,000 chambers in the U.S.**, Accreditation with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is a prestigious honor that distinguishes the high quality, expertise, and strong leadership displayed by Accredited state and local chambers of commerce. In **November of 2022**, the USCC granted the AACCNJ a reaccreditation status with; Statewide Chamber with Distinction. **In October of 2025, the AACCNJ remained New Jersey's only Accredited Chamber or Business Organization, as declared by the largest business federation in the world, the USCC.**



"We are extremely delighted to share with our members and supporters the recent designation awarded by the United States Chamber of Commerce to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, of its reaccreditation status "State Chamber with Distinction", said John E. Harmon, Sr., Founder, President & CEO. "The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey is the only Accredited Chamber of Commerce or Business organization in our state - what a significant achievement for the dedicated staff of professionals and Board of Directors."

IN 2022, THE AACCNJ RECEIVED A PERFECT SCORE IN COMMUNICATIONS & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT FROM THE USCC.



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) Inc. was established in 2007 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, B2B (business-to-business) organization in Trenton, New Jersey. The Founder, President and CEO of the AACCNJ is: John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM., jharmon@aaccnj.com Telephone (609) 571-1620

Serving more than 900 active members, the AACCNJ has become a central beacon for minority and non-minority advocacy building, community and government relations, business development, job retention, and education attainment. The Chamber serves as a mechanism for communication, program creation, and strategic implementation of initiatives and resolutions that help build New Jersey's economic landscape.

To date, the AACCNJ has advocated on behalf of its members on several capital development and procurement projects to insure inclusion. The AACCNJ is a conduit to:



Bridging gaps between the **under-performing populations** in New Jersey and a vital resource to initiating dialogue leading to strategies that address the state's overall competitiveness.



Workforce and development training, job-readiness programs and recruitment services.



Free enterprise activity for **Women, Veteran and Minority-owned business**.



Access to resources in making statewide businesses visible in key markets.



An open line of communication with state and local government officials, and suppliers.



Youth mentorship and entrepreneurial programs.

AACCNJ LOCATIONS

Carnegie Center Building
35 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

379 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08618
(Headquarters)

Transformation Center
165 West Hanover Street
Trenton, NJ 08618

Mill One
1 North Johnston Avenue
Hamilton, NJ 08609

2026 PRESIDENT'S CLUB



ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1

The AACCNJ's new Transformation Center was made possible through the exceptional generosity of Nexus Properties, whose affiliate, Seven One Plus, LLC, gifted the 26,800-square-foot facility to the Chamber. Dante Germano, Managing Member of Nexus Properties, played a key role in facilitating this contribution and ensuring the building could become a long-term asset for the community. This transformative investment is further supported by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) and strengthened through a formal partnership with Rowan University, which will provide educational programming, workforce-development opportunities, and collaborative initiatives.

2

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) and Rowan University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an academic presence for Rowan at the AACCNJ's new hub, The Transformation Center, in Trenton. This partnership aims to expand educational and training opportunities in the region by integrating Rowan's resources with the chamber's business-focused center.

3



AACCNJ "Pathway to Success" wins Two Bronze Telly Awards in the 2025 Competition. Bronze Award DEI Category for (2) Season Six Episodes.



4

TDI secured more than \$2 million in program funding to strengthen workforce pathways for populations facing systemic barriers — including justice-impacted individuals, people directly or indirectly impacted by the opioid epidemic, and New Jersey veterans, women and historically marginalized populations seeking high-growth careers in manufacturing and supply chain logistics.

5

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), in partnership with the Administrators Network, proudly hosted the inaugural Educators of Color Symposium on June 6, 2025, at the Crowne Plaza in Princeton, NJ. The event brought together a dynamic community of educators, thought leaders, and advocates dedicated to advancing equity and excellence in education.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Gary Mann, CEO, Jasfel Analytics, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Marcus Dyer, Principal, Withum, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Tammeisha Smith, CEO, Dunbar Center, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Robert Johnson, Esq., Officer, Chief Diversity Officer, Corporate Group, Gibbons P.C.,

has been recognized by his peers in the 2026 Edition of The Best Lawyers in America®

Schnearia Ashley, Senior Vice President, Commercial Banker, Truist, was appointed to Governor Shapiro's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs

Tanya L. Freeman, Esq., Co-Founder, Black Business Unblinded, Chair, NYSBBA, named to BINJE's 2025 Best Health Care List Chairs: Chair of the University Hospital Board of Directors



LEADERSHIP & STAFF RECOGNITION

Jacqueline E. Baptiste – ROI Influencers People of Color 2025

Jacqueline E. Baptiste – ROI Women In Business 2025

Mary Griffin - Received SDDC Advocate Award

Carmen Gates – Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Carmen Gates – Appointed to the Board of Contact of Mercer County

Vivian Harmon - Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Vivian Harmon - Served as a panelist for Future Ready NJ with NJ Council of County Colleges

Bydeia Harmon – Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Nyanpu Kerkulah - Joined staff as a full time Program Director

Khadir Williams - Joined staff as a full time Program Coordinator

Demetra Alston - Promoted to Employment and Outreach Services Coordinator

MEMBER BENEFITS

ALL MEMBER BENEFITS

- Radio Show
- Membership Spotlight
- Monthly members only virtual call with the President
- Member Events Posted on Website - Free promotion of events, ribbon cuttings and services
- Complimentary Regional networking at AACCNJ events
- Dual membership with the US Chamber of Commerce
- Trade specific Roundtables
- Quarterly meetings
- Annual meeting
- Meeting With A Member of Membership Acquisition Team
- Assistance with MBE/MWBE/SBE/DBE Certifications
- Member Resume Portal
- Q&A opportunities with state and local officials and corporate representatives
- Pro Bono Alliance - Pro bono legal services *Annual revenues of \$500,000 or less.
- Ability to post jobs
- Access to RFP opportunities
- Opportunity for referrals and resources for potential opportunities
- Access to members only, promotions and discounts
- Complimentary website development
- Complimentary monthly ROI reports

MEMBERS LV2 - LV5 (\$2,500-\$7,500)

- Spotlight in Magazines
- Guest on RVN TV
- Priority Scheduling as a Quarterly meeting Presenter
- Priority Scheduling as panelist for AACCNJ events
- Standalone social media promos

MEMBERS LV6 - LV9 PLUS PRESIDENT'S CLUB (\$10K AND ABOVE)

- Pathway to Success TV appearance
- President club Roundtable Participation
- Unlimited promo shares on social media
- Company name and logo on AACCNJ website
- Recognition at the AACCNJ Annual meeting
- Supplier Chain Diversity
- High level networking and access to unique opportunities
- President club breakfast during BLC
- Support on Legislative and Public Policy matters

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS



Gary Mann
Chairman, AACCNJ Board of Directors
President & CEO, Jasfel Analytics



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder, President & CEO
AACCNJ



Tammeisha D. Smith
Vice Chair, AACCNJ
CEO, Dunbar Center, Inc.



Marcus Dyer, Esq.
Treasurer, AACCNJ
Associate, Withum Smith & Brown



Robert L. Johnson, Esq.
Secretary, AACCNJ
Partner, FBT Gibbons

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr. Denise Anderson, Ph.D., MPH
CEO
Denise Anderson & Associates



Racheal Ankrach-Fosu
Chief Technology Advisor
The Galileo PreSchools
Busy Place Early Learning Center, KIDFIN



William Bowie
President & CEO
Empower Construction



Deborah J. Frazier
Wealth Management Advisor
LRG Wealth, Advisors/Hightower



Hosea Johnson
*Emeritus Board Member
President & CEO
Johnson Associates Systems, Inc.



Nadine Jones
Legal Strategist, Media Contributor &
DEI Thought Leader



Alton Shav
Vice President of Op
PRWT



Dr. Funke Olayinka, MD
Owner Nothing Bundt Cake, Wayne, NJ
Founder and CEO, GHIT Consulting, Inc.



Jemia Kinsey Singleton
President/Chief Communications Officer
Kinsey Communications



Will Smith
Vice President
Corporate Shared Services
South Jersey Industries (SJI)



Robert D. Warrington, Esq.
Founding Partner,
Dawkins & Warrington Law Group, LLC



Thom Webster
Chief Executive Advisor
2020 Business Advisors

COMMUNITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr. John E Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder, President & CEO
AACCNJ



Jackie P. Taylor
Chair, Community Board of Directors, AACCNJ
CEO & Founder
Boost Strategy Group LLC



Schnearia Ashley
Senior Vice President
Truist Commercial Banking



Carin Heps
Assistant Vice President, Small Group &
Individual Broker Channel Sales
Delta Dental of New Jersey
Delta Dental of Connecticut



Faye Coleman
CEO
PG Health, LLC



Stacey Kavanagh
Vice President
Market Manager
Provident Bank



Wendy Lanski
Director, Enterprise Vendor
Management & Operations
Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ



Bill Stephey
Principal Executive
Broad Market Media



Viviana Lamm
CEO
Risk Strategy Solutions



Ralph D. Weaver
Founder & Former CEO
East West Connections



Lawrence Wooten
Senior Manager, Supplier Diversity
American Water

DISPARITY STUDY TASK FORCE



Denise Anderson, Ph.D., MPH
Founder & CEO, Denise Anderson
& Associates (DA&A) LLC



Tasha Youngblood Brown, MBA, CISA
Managing Director
EY



Marcus Dyer, CPA, JD
Treasurer, AACCNJ
WithumSmith+Brown, PC



Tanya Freeman, Esq.
Chief Strategy & Policy Officer, AACCNJ
Founder & Managing Partner
Tanya Freeman Law, LLC
Chair, NY State Black Business Alliance



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder, President, & CEO
AACCNJ



Robert Johnson, Esq.
Secretary, AACCNJ
Partner, FBT Gibbons



Gary Mann
Chairman, AACCNJ
CEO, Jasfel Analytics



Monique Nelson
Executive Chair,
UniWorld Group (UWG)



Tammeisha Smith
Vice Chair, AACCNJ
CEO, Dunbar Center, Inc.



Robert Warrington, Esq.
Former Vice-Chair, AACCNJ
Founding Partner, Dawkins &
Warrington Law Group, LLC

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE



Deirdra Oliver
Senior Branch Manager
Visions Federal Credit Union
Saddle Brook, NJ

<https://www.visionsfcu.org/locations/saddle-brook>



Edward Roberts
Founder & Owner
Prep Boyz LLC/ Buggin Out
Pest Control

<https://www.bugginoutipm.com/>



Nadine Brown
CEO
N&R Divine Cleaning
Services LLC

www.nrdivinecleaning.com



Pauline Lloyd
Founder & Executive Director
Albert Islay Walden
Education Alliance, Inc.

<https://www.islaywalden.org/>



Kim Leiby
Business Development
The Lerepco
IT Group

<https://www.lerepco.com/>

AACCNJ STAFF



Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder,
President & CEO



Jacqueline Baptiste
Executive Advisor to
President & CEO
& Brand Ambassador



Mary Griffin, PMP, IOM
Vice President of
Membership
Retention & Programs



Nicole Baptiste, IOM
Vice President,
Membership Acquisition
& Financial Management



Carmen Gates
Vice President of Community
Development and
External Affairs Officer



Tanya Freeman, Esq.
Chief Strategy & Policy Officer, AACCNJ
Founder & Managing Partner
Tanya Freeman Law, LLC



Bydeia Harmon
Community
Development Officer



Vivian Harmon
Executive Director
Training & Development
Institute



Tammy Holloway
Senior Membership &
Program Specialist
NYSBBA, AACCNJ



Demetra Alston
Outreach Coordinator
Training & Development
Institute



Nyanpu Kerkulah
Case Manager
Training & Development
Institute



Jayme Rittenburg
Office Administrator



Margaret Syphax
Member Relations
Support Manager



Melody Holiday
Intake and Workforce
Administrative Coordinator
Training & Development Institute



Khadir Williams
Program Coordinator
Training & Development
Institute

ADJUNCT STAFF



Helen Walker



Evon Judkins



Kimberly Smith



Tress Parker



Myrial Pedersen



Glori Bryson



Joslyn Morman



Vanessa Woolfolk



Victoria Woolfolk



Shawna Biggs



Sabrina Williams

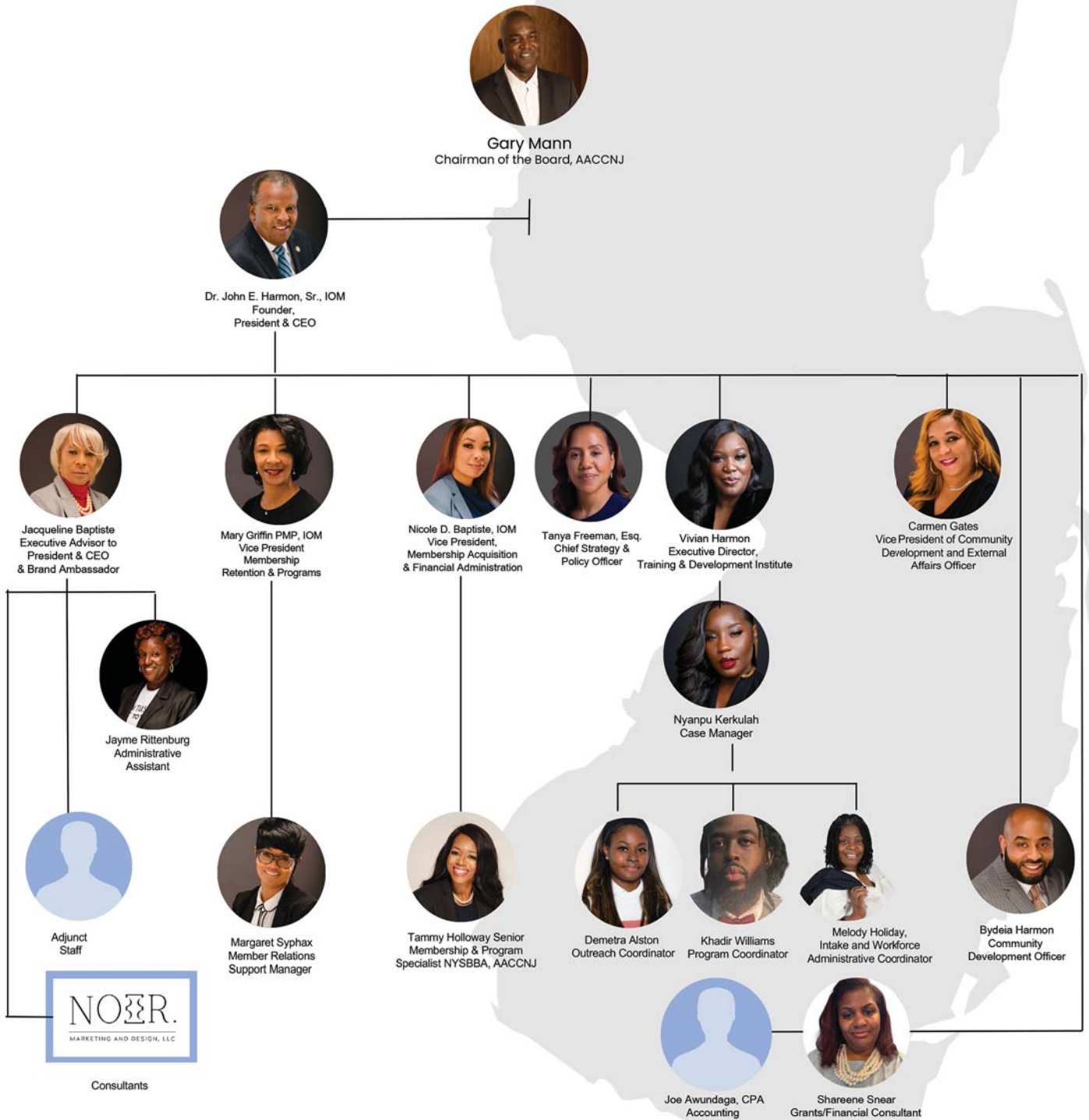


Tamara Williams



Elaina Mason

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART





2 IN MEMORIAM PAST HONOREES ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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2025 WOMEN WHO EMPOWER
AWARDS LUNCHEON
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

LISA LOVELL, MBA

FEBRUARY 10, 1967 - OCTOBER 20, 2025

Dear Lisa,
Thank you for being a shining beacon of light,
hope, inspiration and power...

Jacqueline Baptiste
Rest In Peace & Power

IN MEMORIAM

PAST HONOREES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2025 Honorees

Michelle Bodden, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)

Barbara George Johnson, MPH, JD, John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean,
Vice President External Affairs & Urban Policy, Kean University

Dr. Dionne Ledford, Executive Director & Superintendent, Roseville Community Charter School

Charlene Vickers, Director, Supplier Diversity & Inclusion, Johnson & Johnson

Lisa Nicole Lovell, MBA, Financial Planner, Prudential Advisors, - Keynote Speaker - February 10, 1967 - October 20, 2025

2024 Honorees

Denise Anderson, Founder & CEO, Denise Anderson & Associates, LLC

Samantha DeAlmeida Roman, President, Associated Builders & Contractors, New Jersey Chapter

Waltasia Mansano, Manager, PSE&G Clean Energy Jobs Program

Jacqueline King, MS, Ph.D., Founder & CEO, Black Women Empowered - Keynote Speaker

2023 Honorees

Tunisha Brown, CEO, Impact Magazine

Ruthi Byrne, CEO, Zinn Graves, Field Marketing & Public Relations

Rhonda Jordan, Executive VP & Chief Human Resources Officer, Virtua Health

Robin Robinson-Still, American Water Supply Chain, Eastern & Southeast Divisions (MD, NJ, VA, KY, TN)

Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes, Passaic County Prosecutor's Office

Wendy McSweeney, Executive Vice President, Commercial Community Bank, Diverse Segments, Impact Advisor, Truist - Keynote Speaker

65.9% DOCTORAL
DEGREE



PAST HONOREES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2022 Honorees

Toray Brown, Managing Director, The BSide Entertainment Group,
 Anne Goodwill Pritchett, EVP of Revenue Operations, Hackensack Meridian Health
 Tennille McCoy, Assistant Commissioner, NJ Department of Labor, Workforce & Development
 Catherine Milone, President, Junior Achievement – New Jersey
 Christine Neeley, Vice President Procurement, PSE&G
 Christine Renna, President & CEO, Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey
 The Honorable Shavonda Sumter, Assemblywoman, 35th District, New Jersey

2021 Honorees (Virtual)

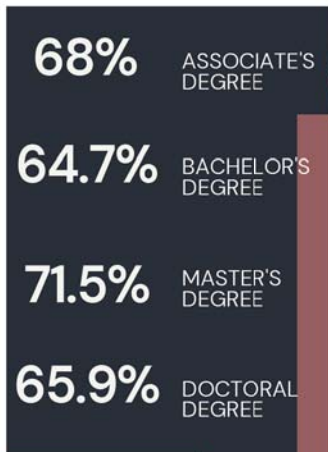
Tai Cooper, Chief Community Development Officer, NJ Economic Development Authority
 Michele N. Sierkerka, Esq., President & CEO, New Jersey Business & Industry Association
 Patricia Perkins-Auguste, Councilwoman-At-Large, City of Elizabeth

2020 Honorees

(Not Held Due to Covid 19 Pandemic Quarantine)

2019 Honorees

Joanne Brooks, Founder, CEO, JSSB Consulting
 Linda Coles, Media Relations Manager, NJM
 Aisha Glover, President & CEO, Newark Alliance
 Willie Mae Veasy, President & CEO, Covenant Business Concepts, LLC



According to findings compiled in a study by the National Center For Education Statistics, Black women have been obtaining degrees at a consistently high rate for the last eight years and counting. Information collected about the higher education among African-Americans between 2009 and 2010 shows that Black women accounted for 68 percent of associate's degrees, 66 percent of bachelor's degrees, 71 percent of master's degrees and 65 percent of doctorate degrees awarded to Black students during that time frame.



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3 REMARKS
KEYNOTE SPEAKER



OPENING REMARKS

Deborah J Frazier
Director, Senior Wealth
Management Advisor
Hightower Wealth Advisor



Deborah J. Frazier is a seasoned wealth manager with more than 30 years of experience in the financial services industry. She specializes in delivering comprehensive financial planning and investment management solutions for corporate executives, business owners, and high-net-worth families. Her areas of specialty include education planning, retirement and estate planning, risk management, and multi-generational wealth transfer strategies.

Deborah holds an MBA from Columbia University, a B.S. in Marketing from Indiana University, and has also earned the industry designation of RICP® (Retirement Income Certified Professional).

An active leader in her community, Deborah serves on the boards of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, the New Jersey Symphony, and CNJN Television Network. She is also a proud member of the Lead New Jersey Class of 2019. As an active member of her church, Deborah serves as an Usher and is a member of the Golf Committee and Financial Education Ministry. She resides in Central New Jersey.



REMARKS

**Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM
Founder,
President & CEO**



In 1997, as a small businessperson, John E. Harmon, Sr. was an early member of the Metropolitan Trenton African American Chamber of Commerce (MTAACC), becoming its president, two years later. Under his guidance, MTAACC grew its membership, forged alliances with business associations/organizations and government, and forged strategic partnerships in the public and private sectors to benefit African American businesses throughout New Jersey. Harmon recognized the growing need for a statewide organization that could align both government and business interests to advocate for New Jersey's Black entrepreneurs and their communities. That led him to establish the AACCNJ – which is heralded as the leading voice for business development and economic empowerment for New Jersey's Black owned businesses.

Harmon has served as the Founder, President, and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), since 2007. In this role he has the responsibility of establishing, implementing, and executing the mission, as well as the fiduciary oversight and governance of AACCNJ in accordance with its Bylaws. In addition, he works to identify strategic partnerships in both the public and private sector to connect AACCNJ members and supporters to resources and opportunities to grow and sustain their goals and objectives. Moreover, Harmon serves as an advocate on behalf of the 1.2 million African American residents and the over 88,000 Black owned businesses statewide to ensure that policy at the municipal, county, and federal level provides fairness, equity and access to a level playing field in the marketplace. Harmon hosts the Gold Telly Award winning - AACCNJ monthly television show "Pathway to Success" as well as the Chamber's weekly radio show "The Empowerment Hour."

Prior to his twenty-seven-year career as a chamber executive, Mr. Harmon was previously employed at The Bowery Savings Bank (now part of Capital One Bank) in New York City where he managed the bank's Residential Real Estate Department overlooking major mortgage loan transactions; and at Chemical Bank where he managed third party loan originations for New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. While working at Chemical Bank, Mr. Harmon established The Affordable Housing Loan Program. Following his banking career, Mr. Harmon founded a transportation company in 1989, called Harmon Transfer Corp. The company transported dry goods, perishable commodities, and produce throughout the Northeast United States and Canada.

Harmon is the Former Chairman of the Board for the National Black Chamber of Commerce; there are 50 Affiliate Chapters of the NBCC and over fifteen international affiliates. Harmon is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's Economic Community Advisory Council (ECAC), Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors, Jersey Central Power & Light and Hermann Transportation. Harmon is also a Board Member of Digital Place Based Advertising Association and is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100.



He is the Founder CEO & Chairman of the New York State Black Business Alliance, Inc. (NYSBBA) and was pinned as a new member of the 100 Black Men of NY in January of 2025. Additionally, Mr. Harmon is a Board member of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (NJCC), New Jersey BPU, Supplier Diversity Development Council (SDDC), Opportunity New Jersey, Better Choices, Better Care NJ, Chairman of Crime Stoppers of Greater Trenton. He is a former Board Member of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Investors Bank, American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), First Book, and Minding Our Business (MOB), a youth entrepreneurial initiative in affiliation with Rider University.

Harmon was awarded in 2024 with the National Association of Corporate Directors Awards – non-profit governance award. NJ Biz Power 100 list for 2024, 2023, 2022 and in 2018 to its Power 10 list. Harmon was acknowledged in 2021 and 2022 by ROI-NJ, for two consecutive years as the Number 1 Person of Color in NJ and was recognized in ROI-NJ “People of Color Influencers” for 2025, 2024, 2023 and 2018. Harmon was recognized as one of the NJ Business Hall of Fame Class of 2021 Laureates on December 9th, 2021. In 2021, for the third consecutive year, Harmon was acknowledged in South Jersey Journal’s list of the “Twenty-five Most Influential African Americans in New Jersey. Harmon was honored by NJBIA as the Executive of the Year in October of 2022, and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra at their Spring Gala in May of 2022. Harmon is also recognized as a Center of Influence (COI) for the United States Army and was selected as a participant in the Joint Civilian Orientation 2018.

Conference (JCOC) hosted by the Secretary of Defense. The JCOC program is the oldest and most prestigious public liaison program in the Department of Defense. Harmon was selected as one of 40 individuals (out of 230 applicants) to attend JCOC 18. In addition, Harmon was the only attendee from the State of New Jersey to participate in the conference. Harmon was the first individual selected as a member of the host committee for NFL Super Bowl XLVII held in NJ in 2014. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, ABA, BA, ABA, h.c., BS, L.H.D. h.c. holds an associate degree in Business Administration from Mercer County Community College and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1983. Shortly before graduating in 1983, Harmon received a call from FDU’s career development office encouraging him to apply for a management training program for future bank presidents. Of 150 candidates, he was one of only 12 chosen – and the only African American. Mr. Harmon also successfully completed a one-year Fellowship on Regionalism and Sustainability sponsored by The Ford Foundation and completed the Minority Business Management Seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 2009. Additionally, Mr. Harmon completed a four- year Chamber Executive Management Program, at Villanova University, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in 2014. Harmon was conferred with an honorary associate’s degree in business administration from Rowan College Burlington County, in 2014. Harmon was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.), honoris causa, from Fairleigh Dickinson University in May of 2022.

Harmon was bestowed with an honorary degree of Doctor of Business Administration from Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ in May of 2024. Dr. Harmon gave the undergraduate commencement address to the class of 2025 and was bestowed with an honorary doctorate of humane letters degree, from William Paterson University at the Prudential Center, in Newark, NJ, in May of 2025. In September of 2025 Dr. Harmon was bestowed with an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Thomas Edison State University, at Cure Arena, in Trenton, NJ. Harmon grew up in a large, working-class family in Trenton, NJ. His father operated his own trucking business; his mother was a factory worker. In high school, Harmon studied auto mechanics and aspired to one day run his own business like his father. Harmon is an avid sports fan, as a young man he played on the local baseball team. Today he enjoys golfing. He has three sons, John Jr., Joshua, and Justin. He is a member of Higher Ground Interdenominational Church, in Ewing, NJ. Harmon released a book in 2025 - Power Moves: The Life and Legacy of a Black Chamber Executive.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Marilyn D. Davis
President/CEO
MDD Connections, LLC



Marilyn D. Davis is a seasoned strategist, specializing in advocacy, organizing, and community engagement. With a diverse career encompassing employment with federal and state governments, organized labor, electoral and issue campaigns, as well as in corporate America. She recently launched a public affairs firm on May 5, 2024. Her firm specializes in government affairs, political consulting, stakeholder engagement, and strategic partnerships. Prior to this venture, Ms. Davis spent nearly a decade as a senior government affairs director in the telecommunications industry.

Prior to her corporate work, she served as the national director of Community Engagement at the Democratic National Committee until December 2016, leading a team focused on engaging stakeholders across various communities in electoral politics and civic engagement. During the Obama/Biden Administration, she held a political appointee position at the United States Department of Labor, where she managed labor and African American engagement and served as the deputy director of the office of Public Engagement.

Ms. Davis has played pivotal roles in multiple presidential campaigns, serving as a consultant to the Obama for America campaign in Florida in 2012 and as the Wisconsin Political Director for John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign. Additionally, she held senior positions on the United States Senate campaign and gubernatorial races for Jon Corzine. Her extensive political career also includes serving as deputy director for Congressional Affairs for the 2013 Presidential Inaugural Committee and director of constituency outreach for the 2012 Democratic National Convention.

Beginning her public service career on Capitol Hill, Ms. Davis worked for various members of Congress before becoming the chief of staff under former Congresswoman Karen Bass (D- CA). She has also held senior positions in state government, serving as the deputy commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Labor and as deputy chief of staff to former Governor Jon Corzine.

Returning to her entrepreneurial roots, Marilyn previously served as the president and chief executive officer of Davis & Associates, LLC, a firm focusing on campaign management, fundraising, political strategy, organizing, and community outreach.



CLOSING REMARKS

Tanya L. Freeman, Esq.
Chief Strategy & Policy Officer, AACCNJ
Founder & Managing Partner
Tanya Freeman Law



Tanya Freeman is a legal strategist, civic leader, and lifelong servant to the people and institutions of New Jersey. Her work across law, healthcare, and community leadership is guided by a simple but powerful belief: strong institutions create stronger communities.

She is the Managing Partner of Tanya Freeman Law, where she leads a family law practice focused on complex, high-asset matters involving closely held businesses and sophisticated financial structures. Her approach is marked by strategic clarity, disciplined negotiation, and steady judgment, particularly in moments that require both precision and compassion.

Before entering the legal profession, she spent more than fifteen years in banking and insurance, leading audit teams and managing enterprise-level risk and compliance functions. That experience continues to shape her work today, bringing financial acuity, operational rigor, and a systems-based perspective to advocacy and leadership. She has represented high-profile clients, including professional athletes and public figures, in matters requiring discretion and trusted counsel.

For more than a decade, she has played a central role in New Jersey's healthcare and civic leadership landscape. From 2013 through 2025, she served on the Board of Directors of University Hospital and was appointed Board Chair in 2018. During her tenure, she helped guide the state's only public hospital through periods of complexity, transformation, and public accountability, with a deep commitment to institutional integrity, access to care, and health equity.

She also serves on the Board of Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, advancing educational opportunity and statewide impact.

Her leadership has been recognized across sectors. In 2022, NJ ROI named her one of the Top 25 Most Influential People in Healthcare. She has also been honored as Family Practitioner of the Year by the Essex County Bar Association and recognized multiple times as a Top Family Law Lawyer by Morris Essex Health and Life Magazine.

A sought-after speaker locally and internationally, she speaks on leadership, business development, equity, and cultural competence, particularly at the intersection of law, healthcare, and community impact. Across every role she holds, her work is rooted in service, legacy, and the responsibility to leave institutions and communities stronger than she found them.

EST. JUNE 2007



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW JERSEY

Accredited State Chamber
of Commerce with Distinction
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

3 HONOREES



HONOREE

Jeannine Frisby LaRue
Partner
Moxie Strategies



The Honorable Jeannine Frisby LaRue is a Partner at Moxie Strategies. Her journey is nothing short of extraordinary, weaving through the intricate corridors of policy, government, and politics.

Previously, she played a pivotal role at The Zita Group, where she was Senior Vice President. At Rutgers University, she served as the Vice President of Public Affairs, where she was a key member of the President's Cabinet, skillfully nurturing relationships across the public and private sectors. Her political acumen was honed as the Deputy Chief of Staff for former New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine, where she oversaw critical state offices including Appointments, Constituency Services, and Intergovernmental Affairs.

During her decade-long tenure as Senior Vice President at Saint Barnabas Health Care System, she advised the CEO and senior management on legislative and regulatory strategies. Jeannine's illustrious career also includes a five-year term on the Casino Control Commission, appointed by Governor James J. Florio, overseeing New Jersey's bustling casino operations. She ultimately became Vice Chair of that Commission. Her roots in advocacy run deep, starting from her days as the chief lobbyist for the New Jersey Education Association, a testament to her enduring commitment to education and public service. This commitment is reflected in her roles as an English teacher, adjunct professor, college administrator, and Trustee for both Camden County College and Essex County College. Jeannine currently co-chairs Rowan University & College of Education Advisory Board. Her dedication to public service didn't stop there; she also dedicated 12 years to elective office, serving on her local school board and town council. Jeannine is one of the founding members of the New Jersey Black Caucus Foundation Board of Directors where she continues to serve. A trailblazer for women and children & issues, Jeannine orchestrated the groundbreaking Statewide Women's Summit in 1992, an initiative so impactful that it was adopted by the state government and renamed the Governors Conference for Women. That conference continued for two decades drawing thousands of participants annually.

During the COVID pandemic while most of the world was on lockdown, Jeannine rewired and created the LaRuelist Cafe' podcast. The Cafe', which exists even today, brought high-level State and Federal officials to the table discussing critical issues affecting everyday lives. Sensitive topics surrounding LGBTQIA, police brutality, mental health and more were debated at length. Jeannine has been a thought-leader in the advocacy space and chairs several boards, including Garden State Equality Fund and Greater Mt. Zion Community Development Corporation. Honored by more than 70 charitable, nonprofit and business organizations, Jeannine continues to remain humble recognizing these awards don't define her but recognize the work that she does.

Jeannine has two children, five grandchildren and Jaxson, a fierce 7 lb Yorkie.



Inez Kaiser was born in Kansas but made her mark in Washington D.C. where she became the first black woman in the United States to own a public relations firm, Inez Kaiser & Associates, which she opened in 1957. Some of her clients included 7-Up, Sears & Roebuck, Sterling Drug and Burger King. Inez was also the first African-American to join the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Her trailblazing efforts not only challenged the racial and gender norms of the time during Jim Crow laws but also paved the way for greater diversity and inclusion in the industry.



HONOREE

Regina Appolon
Government Affairs Advisor
McCarter & English, LLP



Regina is an experienced government affairs professional with deep knowledge of New Jersey's political and legislative landscape. She advocates for clients across a broad range of industries, providing strategic counsel and guiding them through the complex processes and regulatory frameworks of government.

Widely respected in Trenton, Regina brings extensive public and private sector experience to her work. Prior to joining McCarter, she served as a Strategic Advisor and Government Affairs Professional at a leading Trenton-based lobbying firm, where she represented clients in the technology, education, transportation, healthcare, and social services sectors.

Regina also previously served as Chief of Staff for Assemblywoman Angela McKnight, where she played a pivotal role in the passage of legislation that garnered national attention, including the creation of a separate hair braiding license in New Jersey; financial literacy requirements for students in grades 6 through 8; and the enactment of the CROWN Act, which prohibits discrimination based on hair texture and style. Regina began her career as Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative Director to Assemblyman John Wisniewski.

In the community, Regina serves as the Treasurer of the New Jersey Legislative Black Caucus Foundation, and sits on the boards of the NY/NJ Baykeeper and Pam's List.



In 1931, Jane Bolin became the first Black woman to graduate from Yale Law School. But that is just one of her long list of firsts — Bolin also went on to become the first Black woman to join the New York City Bar Association and the New York City Law Department. She became the first Black woman to become a judge in 1939, and for the next 20 years she was the only Black female judge in the country. As a judge, she challenged discriminatory and segregationist practices, such as assigning probation officers based on race.



HONOREE

Abbey True Harris
Partner, Regulatory Affairs & Compliance
Connell Foley



Abbey True Harris is a partner at Connell Foley in its Regulatory Affairs and Compliance Group. In that role, Ms. Harris leverages her expansive law firm, government, and private industry experience to support clients across regulatory, legislative, and governmental processes, including providing counsel on complex litigation and appellate law. In addition to her legal practice, she directs a firmwide community engagement program to amplify Connell Foley & long-standing commitment to pro bono services.

Harris' high-level government service includes serving as chief counsel of the New Jersey Senate Majority Office, where she interfaced at the highest levels, and provided guidance on legislative matters and policy initiatives affecting state residents. In the private sector, Harris most recently worked as chief legal officer and senior vice president of external affairs at Reciprocal Management Corporation. Previously, as director of legal affairs and complex litigation at NJ Physicians United Reciprocal Exchange, she oversaw complex litigation, and executed healthcare-related legislative, amicus, and reform initiatives. Harris has significant experience in highly regulated industries such as affordable housing, insurance, healthcare, and long-term care.

Deeply committed to community service, Harris was recently named to Jersey City Mayor Solomon's transition co-governance committee, focused on housing and economic development. She served for nearly a decade on her local school board; has worked with or volunteered for various federal, state and local government offices; and was appointed to N.J. Supreme Court and Bar Association committees focusing on women and underserved populations. Harris has also worked with non-profit and advocacy groups as a legal or strategic advisor, and has provided pro bono counsel on significant civil rights issues. She founded A. True Impact, a consulting firm offering strategic advice to non-profit and for-profit entities, and co-founded DH Advisors, which provides guidance in affordable housing development. Holding a degree in Spanish, Harris has worked in Latin America in support of local and international charities, and has studied throughout Europe, focusing on affordable housing, urban planning and international politics.

Beginning her legal career in 2005 as a law clerk to New Jersey Supreme Court Justice Virginia A. Long, Harris subsequently spent nearly a decade in private practice with a large national firm, where she concentrated on complex appellate litigation, healthcare and regulatory matters. She earned dual bachelors degrees summa cum laude from Drew University, before earning her J.D. and Master of Public Policy degrees from the University of Michigan.



Parker, an African-American inventor, patented the gas heating furnace in 1919. Her patent also included the idea to use air ducts to deliver heat throughout the home. Although we don't know much about her, her design laid the groundwork for the various forms of central heating we still use in our homes and businesses today.



HONOREE

Glenda Thomas
President & CEO
Electra Grid Solutions, LLC
Electra Lines, LLC



Glenda S. Thomas is a trailblazing leader who shatters industry stereotypes, positioning herself at the frontlines of innovation in the energy sector. As the esteemed President and CEO of Electra Grid Solutions and Electra Lines, Glenda brings over two decades of indispensable experience from her tenure leading supplier diversity and sustainability programs at Southern Company, one of the Southeast's largest utility firms. She has worked tirelessly to increase the company's presence in communities by engaging small, diverse suppliers and assisting them with business development, succession planning, innovation, and utility best practices. Her strengths and key competencies include: Contract sourcing and negotiations, project and program management, strategic planning, supplier sustainability, solution development and supplier diversity leadership.

In her role as CEO, Glenda radiates servant leadership with the highest standards of integrity and ethics. Her commitment to nurturing and uplifting individuals is not just a duty but a joyous calling. To those around her, she is not just a leader; she embodies "The Light," inspiring others to shine their brightest.



Often overlooked, she was a pioneering entrepreneur, investor, and financial agent in California who managed the finances of wealthy clients and used her wealth to fund abolitionist causes.



HONOREE

Funke Olayinka, MD
Chief Executive Officer
GHIT Consulting, inc.



Funke Olayinka, MD, is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of GHIT Consulting INC., a strategic planning and business advisory firm supporting small and medium-sized enterprises across sectors, including healthcare and franchising. A physician and Healthcare IT consultant, Dr. Olayinka has worked with leading institutions nationwide, including NYU Langone, Mount Sinai, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Yale Cancer Center, and Rutgers Cancer Institute, where she has designed chemotherapy protocols, led clinical systems optimization, and advised executive leadership on EMR implementations to improve patient outcomes and operational efficiency.

Through her work at GHIT Consulting, she partners with healthcare organizations, entrepreneurs, and growth-stage businesses to develop scalable strategies, optimize operations, and implement technology-driven solutions that drive sustainable revenue and long-term impact. Leveraging her clinical background and executive advisory experience, she helps leaders translate vision into measurable results while building systems that support both profitability and service excellence, while also supporting workforce development and career pathway initiatives that expand access to employment and professional advancement. In 2018, she was honored with the Role Model Award from the Roselle Area NAACP Chapter.

Dr. Olayinka serves on the Board of Directors for the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, advancing the chamber's mission to promote economic empowerment through entrepreneurship. She is also a member of the Advisory and Advancement Council and the Foundation Board at William Paterson University's Cotsakos College of Business, contributing to institutional strategy and philanthropic growth. In addition, she serves on the Enrichment Grant Review Board of MyGOAL Inc., which supports families of individuals with special needs.

Dr. Olayinka is a former franchise owner of Nothing Bundt Cakes in Wayne, New Jersey, which she successfully operated for five years before selling the business to create more time and flexibility for her family. Above all, she is a devoted wife and mother whose family remains her greatest motivation and guiding purpose.



Annie Turnbo Malone (1877–1957) was a pioneering African American businesswoman, inventor, and philanthropist who became one of the first Black female millionaires. She developed a popular line of specialized hair-care products, "Poro," and established Poro College in St. Louis, a cosmetology school that trained thousands of Black women for economic independence.



HONOREE

Ferlanda Fox Nixon, Esq.
President & CEO
Newark Regional Business
Partnership



Ferlanda Fox Nixon serves as the president and chief executive officer of the Newark Regional Business Partnership (NRBP), the premier chamber of commerce serving the Greater Newark region. She is responsible for all administrative and management functions while executing NRBP's mission to strengthen the Greater Newark business community through connections, resources, and advocacy. Ms. Nixon is the first woman and person of color to lead NRBP in its 157-year history.

Before joining NRBP, Ms. Nixon served as the chief of policy and external affairs for the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey. In that capacity, she led the organization's policy, government, and public affairs agenda, supporting the success of the chamber and achieving multi-stakeholder goals for improved economic status for members of New Jersey's Black community.

Ms. Nixon also is an entrepreneur. She is the founder and chief executive officer of Ferlanda TM . Through an array of customized services, Ms. Nixon provides total leadership consultancy to businesses, organizations, and individuals in the areas of diversity and inclusion; leadership and professional development; communication, presentation and meeting facilitation skills; event planning; marketing; new business development; and general business strategy and administration. Ms. Nixon's services include providing one-on-one coaching, designing and facilitating workshops, and delivering motivational speeches.

Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, Ms. Nixon practiced corporate law for 18 years – five years at Whitman & Ransom, a midsize Manhattan law firm, and 13 years at CIT Group Inc. (CIT), formerly a leading commercial and consumer finance company, now a division of First Citizens Bank. At CIT, Ms. Nixon held the position of vice president, managing chief counsel, and assistant secretary. For nearly a decade, she was the highest-ranking African American woman at CIT.

Ms. Nixon served as an adjunct professor at the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University–Newark. She taught one course on ethics and another on leadership. A graduate of S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, Ms. Nixon received her law degree from Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. At Georgetown, she served as an editor of *The Tax Lawyer* -- the official publication of the American Bar Association's Section of Taxation.



Women's suffrage was only one of many causes that Ada McKinley took up in more than five decades of activism. She was active in the Circle of the Kings Daughters, serving for a period as the fraternal organizations chairman. After the United States entrance into World War I McKinley volunteered as a hostess for black soldiers at War Camp Community Services, providing recreation for black soldiers about to be sent to the European front. Her most public statement in these years came during the race riot that erupted in Chicago in July 1919. & Working to relieve racial tension & McKinley linked arms with three white women reformers--Jane Addams, Mary McDowell, and Harriet Vittum--and & courageously walked through hordes of angry mobs in a salient demonstration of peace and unity. Rioters were startled when they observed the ladies undauntedly sitting in a neighborhood restaurant, breaking the color line and enjoying the camaraderie of each other's company.;

WOMEN WHO EMPOWER
2026 AWARDS LUNCHEON



3 AACCNJ HONOREES

EST. JUNE 2007



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW JERSEY

Accredited State Chamber
of Commerce with Distinction
U.S. Chamber of Commerce



HONOREE

Jacqueline Baptiste
15 Year Anniversary
Executive Advisor to President & CEO
Brand Ambassador



Jacqueline E. Baptiste served as the Executive Assistant to the Founder, President and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) beginning in 2011. On a daily basis, as a Chamber executive, Jacqueline executes the mission of the Chamber, on behalf of the Board of Directors and members of the AACCNJ, as part of a cohesive professional staff, which continues to deliver on the value proposition of the AACCNJ.

Jacqueline is responsible for interface on behalf of the CEO with the AACCNJ, Board of Directors, corporate sponsors, and public and private sector partners along with providing excellent support for the AACCNJ Chief Executive Officer. Jacqueline has the responsibility of Board Reporting, Scheduling –for the CEO’s Calendar & Correspondence - Meetings, Speaking Engagements, Board Affiliations, Corporate Interface, and Engagement.

Additionally - Management of AACCNJ ‘s Signature Annual Events – Oversee and Execute all aspects of Calendar of Events – Outreach for speakers, panelists, sponsors, venues, etc., Proposals for AACCNJ General Support, Special Initiatives – Grant Reporting & Project Management, Jacqueline serves as the lead fundraiser for AACCNJ signature events. Jacqueline manages the Adjunct Staff for Volunteer Opportunities at AACCNJ events; and successfully delivered the full Event Management & Production of AACCNJ Virtual 2020 – 2021 Calendar of Events during the Covid 19 Pandemic, ensuring a seamless continuation of the Relevance, Awareness and Value of the AACCNJ. “In this environment the organization has thrived because we met the challenge of the moment, with a clear assessment and adaption to the current environment. That mindset is what propels me through each day, short term and long terms goals and always connecting back to the mission of the Chamber,” Jacqueline E. Baptiste.

Jacqueline oversees the AACCNJ Marketing team, which includes all Branded Marketing; Social Media, Eblast Marketing, Broadcast Messaging, Chamber Literature, Press Releases, Announcements, and Information for AACCNJ Website. The United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC) the largest business federation in the world, awarded the AACCNJ a perfect score of 100 for Marketing and Communications.

Jacqueline manages the Adjunct Staff for Volunteer Opportunities at AACCNJ events; is the Co-Producer of “Pathway to Success” the Gold Telly Award Winning Television Show; and The Chamber Perspective

Jacqueline earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Rider University. While at Rider, she was part of a core group of Black students that established a Minority Programming Committee, that was instrumental in bringing black musicians and artists such as George Benson to Rider. Jacqueline remains connected to this core group of students who as post – graduates founded the Lawson McElroy Scholarship Committee, annually a scholarship – based on the group’s contributions is provided to a selected undergraduate student of color. In 2021, the group contributed to establishing the McElroy Conference Room in the new Diversity & Inclusion Center on the Rider Campus. Together the group raised or committed nearly \$40,000 in just three months to give back to McElroy, who mentored this group of urban students, which were an experiment, to see if they could be successful in a suburban environment, foreign to everything, they were familiar with products of urban environments. Jacqueline and her fellow alumnae went on to excel in every aspect of business, education, finance, politics and state and local government.



Jacqueline's background includes secondary education at Hamilton HS West, Hamilton, NJ, Corporate Lending on Wall Street, NYC, Investment Banking in Cherry Hill, NJ, Human Resources Management (career outplacement) in Princeton, NJ, and as an Independent Consultant with Arbonne International, a botanical-based skin care company, and ten years on the mommy-track, investing full-time in her family, to ensure there was exposure to the arts, athletics, community service, and education.

Jacqueline was recognized by Business in New Jersey (Binje) Best Black Business Leaders – 2026: She is the behind-the-scenes leader who holds together one of the most influential diversity chambers in the state and in the nation and deserves a moment in the spotlight. Baptiste oversees the group's efforts in fundraising, outreach, events, public relations and marketing. Jacqueline was honored by Mayor Reed Gusciora, in 2026 during Women's History Month for the lasting impact she has made in the City of Trenton, NJ. Jacqueline was recognized by ROI-NJ in 2026, 2025, 2024 and 2023 – Influencers - Women In Business. She was described as the "Heart and soul of the organization – the behind-the-scenes star that ensures fast-growing organization stays on track," ROI. Jacqueline was named to ROI – Influential People of Color for 2025, 2024, 2023. Jacqueline was honored by LaRue List, for Institutional Leadership – celebrating influential leaders driving policy, equity, and systemic change, across NJ, in 2026. Jacqueline was honored by the AACCNJ, in 2021, for ten years of service with the "Legacy Award; 2026 marks a fifteen year milestone with the organization. Jacqueline served on the Board of Greater Trenton, 2022 – 2025 and was an advisory Board Member to the New Jersey Black Women's Collective (NJBWC) 2023.

Jacqueline has two daughters, Nicole D. Baptiste, I.O.M., and Noelle Baptiste, As Vice President of Membership Acquisition & Financial Administration, AACCNJ, Nicole has an increased involvement in activities that afford a greater impact towards the growth and sustainability of the AACCNJ. Nicole Baptiste received her IOM designation after completing a four-year Chamber Executive Management Program at The University of Arizona Tucson, in January 2023. Institute for Organization Management is a professional development program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Graduates receive over 96 hours of course instruction in nonprofit management. Noelle was the Marketing Manager at AACCNJ from 2020-2024 – where she created all AACCNJ Branded content. Prior to joining the AACCNJ, Noelle was a freelance graphic design artist where she created marketing plans and branding strategies for small businesses in the Philadelphia and South Jersey region. Noelle is the Co-Founder of Noir Marketing & Graphic Design. Noelle and her fiancé were honored as 2025 Changemakers at the AACCNJ Corporate Awards Dinner, for their creativity and delivery of all AACCNJ branded content, including newsletters, social media, and marketing collateral for AACCNJ signature events.

Jacqueline is a devoted "Glamma" to her only grandchild, her two year old grandson, Sebastian Noel. Jacqueline is an avid sports fan – LeBron James "The GOAT" tops her list of her favorite athletes. In her free time, she enjoys archiving family photographs, mentoring, researching black history, the arts, reading and interior decorating. Jacqueline and her daughters are members of Union Baptist Church of Trenton, NJ.

Jacqueline, a native New Yorker, resides in Burlington County, NJ.



Alexis Margaret Herman was an American political figure who served as the 23rd United States Secretary of Labor from 1997 to 2001 under President Bill Clinton. She was the first Black American to hold the position.



HONOREE

Nicole Baptiste, IOM
Vice President
Membership Acquisition &
Financial Administration



Nicole D. Baptiste, IOM, serves as Vice President of Membership Acquisition & Financial Administration at the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), where she is a key driver of the organization's growth, revenue strategy, and operational infrastructure.

Nicole began her tenure with AACCNJ as a volunteer Adjunct Staff member in 2011, later joining the organization full-time in 2018 as Administrative Executive Assistant. She advanced to Membership Relations and Special Programs Manager in 2019, where she played a critical role in strengthening member engagement, managing special initiatives, and supporting the Chamber's expanding programming portfolio.

In her current executive role, Nicole leads the Chamber's statewide membership acquisition and engagement strategy, overseeing outreach, onboarding, and retention across a diverse network of corporate, small business, nonprofit, and public-sector stakeholders. She develops and executes high-impact campaigns, cultivates strategic partnerships, and creates programming and events that deliver measurable value and business opportunity to members.

Concurrently, Nicole oversees financial administration operations, managing accounts payable and receivable processes, implementing internal systems and controls, and enhancing reporting and workflow efficiency. She has been instrumental in designing and streamlining operational frameworks that support organizational scalability, accountability, and long-term sustainability. Her ability to integrate revenue growth with financial discipline has positioned her as a central figure in AACCNJ's continued expansion and effectiveness.

Nicole also contributes to the execution of key initiatives focused on economic empowerment, workforce development, and supplier diversity, helping to connect minority-owned businesses to capital, certification opportunities, and corporate and government contracting pipelines.

She earned her Institute for Organization Management (IOM) designation in January 2023 after completing a four-year executive leadership program at the University of Arizona, a professional development program of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce requiring over 96 hours of advanced coursework in nonprofit and organizational management.

Accomplishments & Recognitions:

- Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives 40 Under 40 (2023)
- Alpha Alpha Lambda Community Development NJ Juneteenth Excellence Awards – Top 40 Under 40 (2023)
- Institute for Organization Management Graduate (2023)
- Capital City Area Black Caucus Recognition (2019)
- Founder, AACCNJ Membership Outreach Committee (2020)
- Creator, AACCNJ "Black Friday" Networking Mixers (2020)
- Creator, "Member Promotions" Bulletin Concept (2020)

Prior to her work with AACCNJ, Nicole combined her academic background and passion for equestrian sport to serve as a riding instructor at Essex Equestrian Center in West Orange, New Jersey. She was also a member of the Hollins University Equestrian Team and holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Hollins University.

Nicole's diverse background includes training in classical piano at Westminster Conservatory of Music and ballet at Princeton Ballet School. She remains active in her community through volunteerism and is a member of Union Baptist Church in Trenton, New Jersey.

A proud New Jersey native, Nicole enjoys international travel and spending time at the Jersey Shore. She is also a devoted mother to her young son.



Azie Taylor Morton was the Treasurer of the United States during the Carter administration from September 12, 1977, to January 20, 1981. She remains the only African American to hold that office. Her signature was printed on U.S. currency during her tenure.



HONOREE

Mary Griffin, IOM, PMP
Vice President
Membership Retention & Programs



Mary O. Griffin serves as the vice president of membership retention and programs at the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ). Mary's role is to oversee the day-to-day operations of membership relations and programs structured to meet the goals, objectives and service delivery commensurate with the mission of the chamber.

Prior to her current position, Mary spent 37 years as a program manager /project director in the telecommunications industry. She started with Bell Labs in 1981 and remained with the company as it was renamed over the years (Bellcore, SAIC, CSO, Telcordia and Ericsson).

Mary's expertise in project and program management is illuminated through her ability to successfully execute all project management phases. She is a self-driven, accomplished program manager with a successful track record in building, motivating and leading dynamic teams to achieve and exceed objectives in both the domestic and international markets. She is organized, diligent and result-oriented with great written, oral, interpersonal and negotiation skills. She is also PMI certified.

Mary has effectively executed various projects, globally. She has been responsible for deploying solutions into the customers' environments while developing and maintaining responsibility for overall customer relationships across all staffing and executive levels. Over the past 37 years, she has managed programs/projects in New York (two years), Atlanta, Georgia (three years), South Africa (two years), Brazil (five years), Norway (four years) and Jamaica (one year), with the remaining years served in New Jersey.

Mary has served as the first-line customer interface for various telecommunication solutions. She has developed and managed onshore/offshore teams. Mary demonstrates strong leadership, execution, monitoring and controlling skills while managing communications, schedules, risks, resources and support. She proved to be the "go-to person" to close and finalize open issues/action items to ensure quality operations

Mary received her Bachelor of Science in mathematics and computer science from Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, North Carolina and her master's degree in computer science from Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey. In her pastime, Mary has also served on the Crossroad Theatre Executive Board. Her greatest joy is the love of her family. She is married to Darius V. Griffin and has five lovely children and eight grandchildren (plus one on the way).



Anna Arnold Hedgeman (1899–1990) was an American educator, civil rights leader, and public administrator whose work bridged racial justice, gender equality, and religious activism. She was the only woman on the organizing committee for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and a lifelong advocate for equity in employment, education, and politics.



HONOREE

Carmen Gates
Vice President
Community Development & External
Affairs Officer



Vice President of Community Development and External Affairs Officer African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) Carmen serves as a strategic leader driving initiatives that strengthen community engagement, cultivate impactful partnerships, and expand educational programming—all aligned with the Chamber’s mission to advance economic empowerment within African American communities. During her tenure with AACCNJ, Carmen has been instrumental in the design, development, and execution of high-impact, community-based initiatives. She works in close collaboration with executive leadership and a broad network of stakeholders to deliver innovative, sustainable solutions that address critical challenges, including economic inequities, disparities in education, access to quality healthcare, and workforce diversity across New Jersey.

Her diverse professional background spans information technology, media, hospitality, healthcare, and the legal sector—equipping her with a multidimensional perspective and a proven ability to drive cross-sector collaboration and forward-thinking innovation. A lifelong New Jersey resident, Carmen is deeply committed to creating equitable opportunities and generating meaningful, lasting community impact. Beyond her professional work, she is a devoted mother and grandmother who values family, enjoys traveling, and finds joy in time spent at the beach.



Patricia Roberts Harris was an American politician, diplomat, and legal scholar. She served as the 6th United States secretary of housing and urban development from 1977 to 1979 and as the 13th United States secretary of health and human services from 1979 to 1981 under President Jimmy Carter.



HONOREE

Vivian Harmon, M.Ed., MSW, LSW
Executive Director,
Training & Development Institute



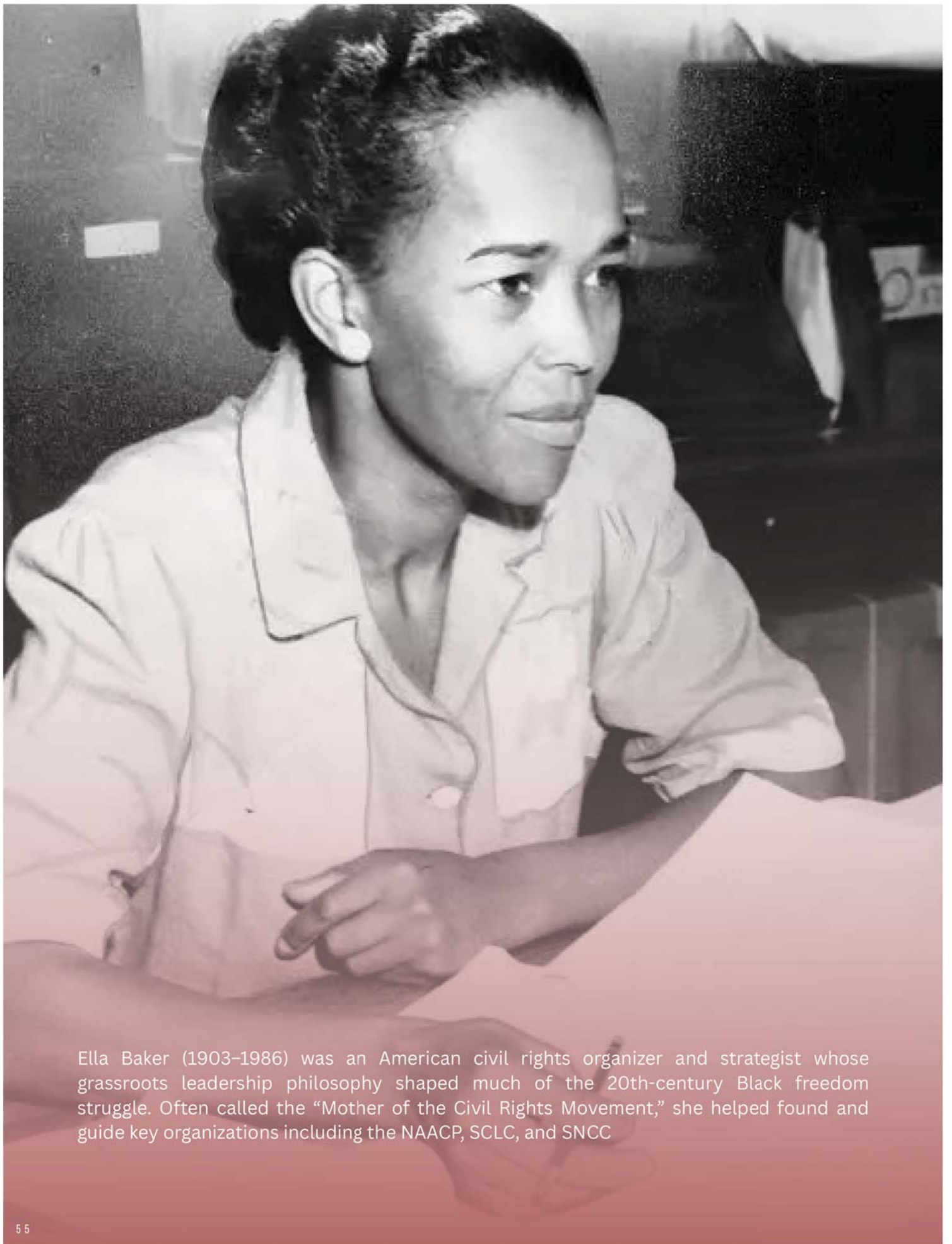
Vivian D. Harmon, LSW is a strategic leader, workforce development executive, and licensed social worker whose work sits at the intersection of economic mobility, systems change, and community impact. As Executive Director of the Training and Development Institute (TDI) at the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), she leads high-impact initiatives designed to move individuals from instability to sustainable careers while strengthening the regional workforce and small business ecosystem.

With over two decades of experience, Vivian has evolved from direct practice into a results-driven operator and accomplished grant strategist, securing and managing public and private investments that fuel scalable workforce solutions across New Jersey. Her portfolio includes large-scale initiatives such as Pathways to Recovery and Empowered Reintegration—programs that collectively address systemic barriers facing justice-impacted individuals, underserved communities, and those navigating economic hardship.

Vivian is known for building infrastructure that works, designing programs, aligning partners, and executing with precision. Her leadership reflects a rare balance of compassion and accountability: deeply rooted in trauma-informed, person-centered principles, yet unapologetically focused on outcomes and long-term sustainability. She does not simply advocate—she architects pathways that produce results.

Prior to her executive leadership at AACCNJ, Vivian held senior roles in youth and family services, including Interim Director of Program Operations at LifeTies, Inc., where she oversaw housing, mental health treatment, and supportive service programs for vulnerable youth populations across New Jersey. Her early career in residential care, workforce development, education and treatment services continues to inform her approach to leadership—grounded in dignity, equity, and the unwavering belief in human potential.

A proud alumna of Rutgers University, Vivian holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Douglass College, a Master's Degree in Education with a concentration in Instructional Technology, and a Master's Degree in Social Work with a focus on direct practice. While her credentials are extensive, she defines her work more simply: it is her calling. She remains committed to advancing people, building partnerships, and shaping systems that create real opportunity—work she will continue for as long as she is able.



Ella Baker (1903–1986) was an American civil rights organizer and strategist whose grassroots leadership philosophy shaped much of the 20th-century Black freedom struggle. Often called the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,” she helped found and guide key organizations including the NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC

Special Recognition

STAFF

MARGARET SYPHAX
JAYME RITTENBURG
NYANPU KERKULA
DEMETRA ALSTON

ADJUNCT STAFF

HELEN WALKER
JESSICA DESMOND
LETICIA ACEVDO
KIMBERLY SMITH
EVON JUDKINS
TRESS PARKER
TAMARA WILLIAMS
NANCY JORDAN
DONNA REED
ELAINA MASON
SHAWNA BIGGS
SABRINA WILLIAMS

4

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Thank you to our Media Partners





20 JUNETEENTH
26 INNOVATION
EXPO LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

Cocktails & Connections: Expo Kickoff

MAY 28, 2026
6:00 PM-8:00 PM

Hot Butter Supper Club
9003 N Crescent Blvd
Pennsauken, NJ 08110



Join the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) for an exciting evening of connection, conversation, and opportunity at Cocktails & Connections: Expo Kickoff – the official pre-event to our highly anticipated Business Expo.

- Early access to Expo details, vendor opportunities, and ticket availability
- A chance to secure your spot at the Expo before it sells out
- Music, cocktails, and an engaging crowd
- Build relationships before the Expo
- Position your business in front of key decision-makers
- Explore last-minute vendor and sponsorship opportunities

Hosted just minutes from the Expo location, this dynamic evening at Hot Butter Supper Club will bring together business leaders, entrepreneurs, corporate partners, and professionals from across the region for a high-energy, social experience designed to spark new relationships and set the tone for what's to come.

2026 JUNETEENTH INNOVATION EXPO

LEADING THE WAY FORWARD



JUNE 10, 2026

8:30 A.M. - 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
 DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON - CHERRY HILL, PHILADELPHIA
 CHERRY HILL, NJ 08002

CALLING ALL INNOVATORS

An opportunity to showcase your innovations in technology, health, arts, sustainability, products, goods and services.



New Audience

Entrepreneurs, creators, companies, and social media influencers who are eager to showcase new ideas



New Focus on Innovation

Pitch contest, giving one winner the chance to work directly with a world renowned company



New Experience

New dynamic, open-floor experience designed for exploration and discovery

INVENTORS, CREATORS, & FORWARD THINKERS

If you've built something new, reimagined what's possible, or created an invention that deserves to be seen, this is your moment. From technology and health to arts, sustainability, business, and beyond —show the world what the future looks like through your work.

EXPO FLOORPLAN



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EST. JUNE 2007

20 JUNETEENTH 26 INNOVATION EXPO LEADING THE WAY FORWARD



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
NEW JERSEY



FIRESIDE CHAT

ELVIN ROSS

CEO, e. ross studios Jazzland & Nox
Point AI Solutions in New Orleans

DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM

FOUNDER, PRESIDENT, CEO, AACCNJ

MAJORA CARTER

Real Estate developer, Urban revitalization
strategy consultant, MacArthur Fellow,
Peabody Award winning broadcaster

JUNE 10, 2026

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH ELVIN ROSS:
12:00 P.M. - 2:00 PM

JUNE 10, 2026

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH MAJORA CARTER:
2:15 P.M. - 3:15 PM

Elvin Ross: An Emmy Award-winning composer and multiple American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) Screen Music Award recipient, Elvin fuses artistic vision with technological innovation to drive economic revitalization in New Orleans East and establish the city as a national leader in creative tech and AI infrastructure.

Majora is responsible for the creation of numerous economic developments, technology inclusion projects, green-infrastructure developments & policies, and job training & placement systems. Majora is quoted on the walls of the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History and Culture in DC: "Nobody should have to move out of their neighborhood to live in a better one" - which is also the subtitle of her 2022 book, Reclaiming Your Community.



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WWW.AACCNJ.COM





EST. JUNE 2007

AACCNJ ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

SAVE THE DATE

20 MONDAY
JULY, 2026

7:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.



FIDDLER'S ELBOW COUNTRY CLUB
BEDMINSTER TWP., NJ 07921

CELEBRITY GOLFERS NFL ALUMNI & HALL OF FAMERS FROM THE NEW YORK GIANTS



BART OATS

LEE ROUSON

HOWARD CROSS

HARRY CARSON

CHARLES WAY

BRIAN KELLY

BILLY TAYLOR

STEVEN BAKER

Join the AACCNJ for an unforgettable day on the greens at our Golf Classic at Fiddler's Elbow Country Club. Set against the beautiful backdrop of one of New Jersey's most prestigious private golf destinations, this premier event brings together business leaders, entrepreneurs, and community partners for a day of friendly competition, networking, and celebration.



SCAN HERE TO REGISTER OR VISIT WWW.AACCNJ.COM

INDIVIDUAL GOLFER - \$400.00
FOURSOME - \$1600.00



EST. JUNE 2007

AACCNJ ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

SAVE THE DATE

20 MONDAY
JULY, 2026

7:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.



FIDDLER'S ELBOW COUNTRY CLUB
BEDMINSTER TWP., NJ 07921

MEMBER FOR THE DAY ADMISSION: \$400.00

NEW CLUB & SPA EXPERIENCE MEMBER FOR THE DAY

Non-golfers can still be part of the experience through our Member for a Day package. This special offering allows guests to enjoy the exceptional amenities of Fiddler's Elbow Country Club while experiencing the club lifestyle firsthand. Participants will have access to golf and tennis clinics led by club professionals, as well as the opportunity to relax and unwind with access to the club's spa and pool facilities.

MEMBER FOR THE DAY ADMISSION INCLUDES:



Networking Breakfast
with Guest Speaker



Tennis and Golf Clinic
with FECC professionals



One Hour Massage
and Pool Access



Post Tournament Awards
Reception Admission

www.aaccnj.com 609-571-1620
379 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08618

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EDUCATORS OF COLOR LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM 2026

IMPROVEMENT BY DESIGN: BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE RESULTS



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[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER AT AACCNJ.COM](http://AACCNJ.COM)



JULY 9, 2026
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM



Crowne Plaza Princeton
Conference Center
900 Scudders Mill Rd. Plainsboro, NJ

Type of Registration	General	AACCNJ Member
Early Bird Registration Ends - May 15th	\$150	\$115
General Registration	\$200	\$165
Onsite** if event is not sold out		\$250
Exhibit Table Only		\$450

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Improvement by Design: Building Leadership Capacity for Sustainable Results Join 300+ educators and leaders for a powerful day of learning, connection, and action. This isn't just inspiration - it's implementation. Design the Schools Our Students Deserve.

The Educators of Color Symposium 2026 brings together educators, school leaders, and change agents committed to turning vision into measurable impact, through a dynamic keynote, interactive breakout sessions, and powerful networking experiences.

Informative Panel Discussion - Educator Health & Wellness with Q&A

EST. JUNE 2007



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW JERSEY



BLACK DIASPORA UNITED
AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF NEW JERSEY

2026 FIFA WORLD CUP (TM) WATCH PARTIES HOSTED BY AACCNJ

Cooper's Riverview
50 Riverview Plaza
Trenton, NJ 08611

Free Admission

June 19, 2026
4:00 PM - 8:00 PM EST



July 19, 2026
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM EST



EST. JUNE 2007



African American
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF
NEW JERSEY

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey has been incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code and provides advocacy and support for businesses throughout the State of New Jersey.

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